

Charter Schools Program – Quality Counts

Program Evaluation FAQ | September 2018

1. [Why is the Indiana Department of Education conducting an evaluation of the CSP Quality Counts program?](#)
 2. [Who is conducting the evaluation?](#)
 3. [What does the evaluation entail?](#)
 4. [Are CSP grantees required to participate in the evaluation?](#)
 5. [Who at our school will be involved in the evaluation?](#)
 6. [How much time will the evaluation take?](#)
 7. [If we are part of the case studies, how will we know when the evaluators will visit us?](#)
 8. [What kinds of questions will we be asked?](#)
 9. [Whom should we contact with questions about the evaluation?](#)
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1. Why is the Indiana Department of Education conducting an evaluation of the CSP Quality Counts program?

The Department committed to evaluating the CSP program for several reasons. The Department wants to continuously improve the quality of schools in Indiana and the quality of technical assistance we are providing to grantees of our programs. Evaluation is an opportunity for the Department, CSP grantees, and non-grantee charter schools to learn from the innovative practices being implemented in CSP grantee schools. Evaluation during program implementation will also help us collectively improve and make it more likely the program's goals are achieved.

2. Who is conducting the evaluation?

The Department has hired Chamberlin/Dunn, LLC ("C/D"), an Indiana-based research and planning firm that has conducted evaluations of education programs throughout the country.

3. What does the evaluation entail?

Evaluation is not a compliance audit (note, however, the Department will be conducting monitoring visits for compliance, as a separate grant activity). Instead, the evaluation is designed for learning, to better understand the successes and barriers CSP grantees and the Department encounter during implementation.

Our evaluators from Chamberlin/Dunn will examine student outcome data each year and will gather qualitative data throughout the year in several ways:

- From schools directly, through surveys (spring)
- For case study schools,* in-person and phone interviews (fall, winter, spring)
- From parents of students at CSP grantee schools, through brief surveys (spring)
- From charter authorizers and management organizations (as applicable), through interviews (spring)
- From the Department directly, through interviews and collected data (fall, winter, spring)

*Each year, three schools will be selected for case studies, based on geography, student population and grant purpose (open, expand, replicate). Case studies are designed to tell a deeper story of implementation and highlight innovations, successes, and barriers to success. The Department will notify schools each fall if they have been selected as a case study school.

4. Are CSP grantees required to participate in the evaluation?

Yes, as a condition of funding, you agreed to participate in evaluation activities. C/D's evaluators recognize the many competing demands for time and will strive to make efficient use of your time. Your participation ensures the evaluation gathers the data it needs in order to be useful.

5. Who at our school will be involved in the evaluation?

C/D will want feedback, via survey for all schools and via group and one-on-one interviews for case study schools, from the following individuals at each school:

- School leader(s)
- Teachers
- Staff
- Other grant implementer(s)

In addition, as mentioned in Question 3, C/D will seek feedback from parents via a brief survey. The Department will request the help of school personnel to distribute the survey to parents.

6. How much time will the evaluation take?

For each of the three case study schools each year, C/D will request one, 60-minute introductory call and group interview with key grant implementers in the fall; one, 60-minute telephone check-in with key grant implementers in the winter; and 30-minute, individual interviews with key grant personnel in the spring.

For non-case study schools, the survey should take school personnel approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. C/D may follow up by email requesting clarification of responses.

7. If we are part of the case studies, how will we know when the evaluators will visit us?

The Department will notify each case study school in the fall and will connect you to our evaluators. They will coordinate with you on the school personnel to involve and on the timing of the introductory and first evaluation interview, the winter check-in call, and the spring interviews. They will make every effort to hold these discussions on dates and times that are convenient for the greatest number of people.

8. What kinds of questions will we be asked?

The evaluators will ask about:

- Your experiences so far with grant implementation and the innovation(s) you are pursuing with grant funds
- The ways you've elected to use CSP funds
- How CSP funds have, or have not yet, contributed to student success and/or the closing of achievement gaps
- The progress you've made and the successes you're most proud of each year
- The challenges or barriers your school has encountered with implementation (we do not expect everything to go smoothly all the time!)
- Any additional support or assistance you need from the Department
- How your authorizers have, or could, support implementation
- Specific questions tailored to your grant type or your implementation strategies

9. Whom should we contact with questions about the evaluation?

Contact Cole Dietrich, Assistant Director of Charter Schools and Special Programs, at (317) 233-0786 or adietrich@doe.in.gov.

Or, you can contact our evaluators directly: Molly Chamberlin, Ph.D. at mc@chamberlindunn.com or Nicole Dunn at nd@chamberlindunn.com.